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February 28, 2007

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE
ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY

The Committee on Public Health and Public Safety convened on February 28, 2007, with Chairman William White presiding and Committee Members Aldermen Walter Pero and Dennis Sullivan also present and voting. Also present were Fire Fighters' Union President Jay Colbert, Somerville Police Patrolmens' Union President Jack Leutcher, Alex Pirie from the Immigrant Service Providers Group, representatives of the Somerville News and Somerville Journal and interested members of the public.

Mr. Colbert addressed the committee regarding the apparatus and infrastructure of the Fire Department and submitted a list of equipment along with a list of problems at the Highland Ave. Fire Station. Mr. Colbert told the members of some of the problems in the department, including:

- \$40,000 of scheduled computer work not being completed
- Engine 4 is manned only 20% of the time leading to increased first response times
- the tower truck is dispatched in an emergency, but this vehicle can't access some of the streets and it doesn't have a water supply
- some of the fire fighting equipment dates back to 1989
- old, recycled police cars are being used by various departments
- the department is down 27 fire fighters
- the average age of the department's fire fighters is 47
- the department is having difficulty getting supplies
- personnel does not receive specialized training, e.g. defined space and trench, resulting in some work being passed to other fire departments
- Engine three personnel have been living in a trailer for 9 years
- Morale is at an all time low

Mr. Colbert told the members that Engine 4 has to become a major priority for the department and that the staff to man it is available. He said that is it not being utilized because of money, not manpower.

Alderman Pero requested that the Fire Chief address the committee regarding Engine 4 and explain why it is not in operation.

Alderman Pero's motion *that a communication be sent to the DPW Commissioner, the Chief Fire Engineer and the Mayor's Office requesting their presence when the committee views the conditions at the Fire Department's buildings* was approved.

Alderman Sullivan's motion *that the committee conduct an on-site examination of the Fire Department's buildings at a designated time* was approved.

Alderman Sullivan's motion *that the Chief Fire Engineer provide the committee with a written report of the Fire Department's staffing levels, including a list of personnel who are out on sick leave* was approved.

Alderman White's motion *that the Chief Fire Engineer provide the committee with data for the last three years detailing how much money has been received in grants and, if no grants were received, an explanation of why the department hadn't applied for any* was approved.

Alderman White's motion *that the Chief Fire Engineer provide the committee with a list of the Fire Department's training courses offered during the last year along with a list of personnel who have attended the training courses* was approved.

The committee discussed matters before it and took action on the following item:

182345: Communication from City Engineer - Responding to #182078 Re: Safety of the McGrath Hwy. Overpass.

RECOMMENDATION: Should be placed on file

VOTE: Unanimous, 3 - 0 in favor

Alderman William White, Chairman
Committee on Public Health and Public Safety

COMMITTEE REPORT

Report of the Committee on Public Health and
Public Safety, February 28, 2007

In Board of Aldermen

Clerk